## UNITED STATES

## DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## 

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Flanagan - Interior 5634

For Release DECEMBER 19, 1962

## ALASKA FURS APPRAISED

Recent appraisal of 101 luxury seal furs by five experts of the fur trade marked another step in the Department of the Interior's program to select a contractor to process the Pribilof Islands fur seal harvest, the Department announced today.

The 101 furs were submitted by four of the five firms which have expressed an interest in securing a Government contract for processing the Pribilof skins. The current contract with the Fouke Fur Company of Greenville, South Carolina terminates on December 31, 1962.

The industry experts who participated in the recent appraisal are: Louis E. Himmel of I. Himmel and Son, Chicago, Ill.; Sidney Lambert of Sidney Lambert, Inc., New York; Lester Taffer of Nathan Taffer, Inc., New York; Donald Bernstein of Carl Bernstein and Son, New York; and Walter Schwartz of Federica Furs Inc., also of New York.

The furs were submitted by the Pierre Laclede Fur Co., St. Louis, Mo., SUPARA, Inc., Chicago, Ill.; Fouke Fur Company, Greenville, S. C.; and C. W. Martin and Sons Ltd., London, England.

The next step in the selection of a contractor will be to submit the luxury furs to the Bureau of Standards for physical and chemical tests. The ability of the firm to fulfill the contract also will be considered before any award is made. Selection of the contractor or contractors probably will not be made before February 1963.

As a basis for the contract negotiation the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, Fish and Wildlife Service, issued an invitation for proposals and prospectus in June 1962, for the processing and selling of the furs. Raw skins were supplied to 11 firms and individuals for use in developing an adequate process.

The Department explained that the Government has managed the Pribilof Islands seal herd since 1911. Between 1867 (when the United States obtained the Islands located in the Bering Sea as part of the Alaska purchase) and 1911 harvesting of seal skins was done by contract. Today it is done by Alaska natives.

In 1911 the United States, Canada, Japan and Russia entered into a treaty on the management of seals. This was America's first step in international conservation. Under the treaty all killing of seals out at sea was stopped. This made it possible to begin conservation of the Pribilof seal herd. The task was assigned to the Department's Fish and Wildlife Service.

Last year some 78,000 of the pelts were harvested. Furs sold in 1962 were valued at more than \$4,000,000.